

Sentence Imitation Exercise

Using Poetry as a Model

Original Sentences:

The old masters were never wrong about suffering. They understood how it took place. It is a common pattern for humans to follow. Suffering takes place while someone is eating or opening a window. Suffering also can take place when someone is just dully walking along.

These three sentences, though valuable collectively lack the sort of impact that might get a reader interested, might spark an idea or an insight. To combine them into a single sentence as W.H.Auden did in his poem 'Musee de Beaux Arts' is to master the art of sentence crafting.

Here is Auden:

About suffering they were never wrong, the Old Masters: how well they understood its human position: how it takes place while someone is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along.

Now it's your turn. Below you will have two sets of sentences. Choose one to craft into a single sentence following the pattern established by Auden.

Set #1:

The young children were always right about the neighbors. They read their character precisely. It was a precision that others envied. A neighbor's character could be kind and welcoming or harsh and off-putting. Their character could simply be indifferent to all the activity that small children get into in a quiet neighborhood.

Set #2:

The Kardashian sisters were never wrong about drama. Their aches and pains and public break-ups were well-orchestrated. Drama can take place on twitter or even on snapchat and instagram. Drama can even take place when people are disinterested and apathetic.

My Choice: _____

My recrafting:

The Original Poem by Auden

Musee des Beaux Arts

W. H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong,
The old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

